
Obituaries

DONALD C. BALFOUR, 1882-1963

Dr. Donald C. Balfour, Emeritus Director of the Mayo Foundation and former Professor of Surgery of the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, Graduate School, University of Minnesota, died in Rochester, Minnesota, on July 25, 1963. He had been associated with the Mayo Clinic since 1907 and will be especially remembered as a medical educator and a gastric surgeon of international renown.

In 1910, Dr. Balfour married Miss Carrie Mayo, the elder daughter of Dr. William J. Mayo. She died in 1960, seven months after their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Members of the Medical Library Association who attended the annual meeting in Rochester, Minnesota, in 1958 will no doubt remember meeting Dr. and Mrs. Balfour. Dr. Balfour, as an honorary member of our Association, always took an interest in our affairs and at the Rochester meeting extended his warm and jovial hospitality to our members. Mrs. Balfour and her sister, Mrs. Waltman Walters, were gracious as our hostesses during the meeting at a tea held in Balfour Hall, Mayo Foundation House. Mayo Foundation House was formerly the residence of Dr. and Mrs. William J. Mayo, and Balfour Hall was the ballroom where the Mayo daughters and their friends held many festive occasions.

Dr. Balfour was born in Toronto, Canada, and received the M.B. degree in 1906 and the M.D. degree in 1914 from the University of Toronto. He was an intern in the Hamilton City Hospital, Ontario, from 1906 to 1907 before coming to Rochester. In 1960, while preparing an article on Sir William Osler and the Mayo Clinic (1), I was able to recount Dr. Balfour's anecdote about his attending a lecture as a medical student in Toronto given by Sir William Osler in 1903. The lecture was "The Master-Word in Medicine," and it was not until nearly the end of the very lengthy lecture that the students learned that "the master-word is work!"

As a junior assistant to the Mayo Clinic Library staff, I became acquainted with Dr. Balfour shortly after my arrival in Rochester in the fall of 1934. Since that time, we have had a friendship that was interrupted only by his death. Dr. Balfour was greatly interested in the Mayo Clinic Library, and his encouragement and many kindnesses to all of us on the staff will long be remembered. It was my pleasure to be a member of a committee which under his guidance planned the stained-glass window that subsequently was erected in the Mayo Foundation House. A detailed description of the window and a foreword by Dr. Balfour have been published in our BULLETIN (2). Dr. Balfour had been feted at home and abroad up to

the time of his retirement from the Mayo Foundation and the Mayo Clinic in 1947, and he continued to receive high honors. He was presented the Distinguished Service Award by the American Medical Association in 1955 and the Friedenwald Medal by the American Gastroenterological Association in 1956. Other honors that he received included the centennial award of Northwestern University in 1951 and the University of Minnesota Builder of the Name Award in 1950.

During World War II, Dr. Balfour's tenure as Director of the Mayo Foundation saw more than 1,500 medical officers of the armed forces assigned to the Mayo Foundation for training in special fields. In recognition of his services to the Army and Navy, Dr. Balfour received the President's Certificate of Merit in 1948 and citations by the Secretaries of War and the Navy. During the war, he also served as an honorary consultant both to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery of the U.S. Navy and to the Army Medical Library.

Detailed accounts of Dr. Balfour's multiple contributions to medicine and of his many honors will be published in the near future. His wisdom and profound knowledge are to be found in his writings. Let me quote from the foreword to *Cardiac Classics* (3), which in his customary generosity he prepared for the compilers in 1941:

While it is usually true that advances in any field of endeavor have been accomplished through specialization, it is also true that the principles upon which practice should be based have been, and probably will continue to be, set up by those who possess an adequate knowledge of general medicine and can, therefore, correlate this with that acquired through intensive investigation of any special field. In the further development of specialization it is essential that education should focus on the fact that the broader the knowledge of general medicine, the more likely will investigations in any special field prove to be of permanent value. . . . In the appraisal of medical literature, students and practitioners are likely to overlook the writings of those who established the fundamentals upon which subsequent progress has been made. These epoch-making contributions are also evidence of the fact that in the study of disease thorough and accurate observation is the first requirement and supersedes other methods.

THOMAS E. KEYS

REFERENCES

1. KEYS, T. E. Sir William Osler and the Mayo Clinic. *Proc. Mayo Clin.* 35: 229-238, Apr. 27, 1960.
2. BALFOUR, D. C., AND KEYS, T. E. A stained glass window on the history of medicine. (Foreword by Donald C. Balfour, M.D., and description of the window by Thomas E. Keys.) *BULLETIN* 32: 488-495, Oct. 1944.
3. WILLIUS, F. A., AND KEYS, T. E. *Cardiac Classics*. St. Louis, C. V. Mosby Co., 1941. 858 p. (Reissued in two volumes in a paperback edition as: *Classics of Cardiology*. New York, Dover Publications, 1961.)